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ABSTRACT

This paper reports on the results of a survey on inservice teacher education. Three primary groups were surveyed: teachers, professors, and parents of school children. There was unanimous agreement between the three groups that there is not enough inservice currently provided to teachers. However, there was wide variation of opinion on what the best type of inservice program might be, who can best implement it, and how it should be financed. Tables and data analysis accompanying this paper illustrate these differences of opinion in the following areas: (1) who provides the most help in an inservice program; (2) teacher and professor perceptions of what format of inservice is most likely to provide innovative content; (3) teacher interest in assuming an inservice instructor role; (4) parents' attitudes toward inservice programs; (5) what sources of funding should be used for paid inservice education; and (6) what type of inservice education is an excellent or good idea. This study was conducted in three states--Michigan, Georgia, and California--and included both urban and rural communities. (JD)

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Inservice Teacher Education: A Study Of The Perceptions of Teachers, Professors and Parents About Current and Projected Practice

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Abstract

There is unanimous agreement between all three primary role groups surveyed in this study (teachers, professors, parents) that there is not enough inservice currently provided for teachers in their respective parts of the country. While the recollection of teachers generally is that they received only minimal amounts of inservice at the critical phase of their career when they first began teaching, they report that those relatively small portions represent more inservice, in fact, than they now engage in.

It would appear that the qualitative problem is as serious as the quantitative problem. The great majority of teachers and professors see inservice generally as 'only somewhat' or 'not very' effective. Parents are generally more positive in their appraisal. All role groups do perceive a fair amount of innovative content in inservice but perceptions differ as to who provides this innovation. Professors see college courses as most commonly providing innovative content and teachers see district workshops and interactions with their peers as more innovative. Innovation appears more attached to their role than inservice itself.

There are also basic differences in perception as to who the most effective inservice instructors are. When asked about inservice in general, teachers perceive teachers to be the most effective instructors, while professors see professors as most effective. When specific types of inservice are identified, however, teachers do perceive professors as more effective for various types of inservice but those in higher education fail to acknowledge much of an instructional role for teachers in any type of inservice. District supervisors and consultants are invariably seen as less effective in inservice than these two primary role groups and principals

are even more rarely perceived as effective instructors in inservice.

Both those in higher education and those in the schools see major problems constraining against them and their ability to cooperate in decisions about inservice. Neither are collaborative forms of governance about inservice restricted to those within the profession. Parents view themselves as having a very active role in decisions about each and every aspect of inservice articulated in the survey.

Teachers prefer that strategies be instituted to free them from instructional responsibilities to engage in inservice or even that schools be closed for such activity periodically. Those in higher education are even more supportive of such strategies while, as might be expected, parents are less positive about such proposals, but nonetheless supportive in general. The reality is, however, that teachers rarely have experienced programs of inservice which pay them or release them from instructional responsibilities. Thus, it is not surprising that job-embedded forms of inservice or on-the-job follow through to other forms of inservice are rare. Similarly while teachers value on-site and job-embedded types of inservice, they do not see these as critical as their counterparts in higher education appear to, but tend to value activities which will take them out of their school sites as much as those that come to them. In summary, there tends to be more consensus about problems than solutions and a greater tendency to identify the potential for effectiveness with self than others.

The Frequency of Inservice

Teachers across all four populations surveyed (California, Michigan, Georgia, and the 21 Urban/Rural Projects across the United States) indicated they currently engaged in but a modest amount of inservice. For example, the percent of teachers who stated they they engaged in a great amount of inservice ranged only from about 10 to 20% (11% Michigan, 21% California). Conversely, the percentage of teachers who stated they engaged in only slight amounts of inservice ranged from 32% in the federally-funded Urban/Rural Projects to as much as 61% in California. Professors were even more emphatic in their collective perceptions. Less than one percent of the professors in Michigan and Georgia believed teachers to engage in substantive amounts of inservice and as many as 89% of them classified teacher involvement as slight. The perception of the tax payer-parent was more varied. The range between the four populations of parents that would classify inservice as considerable was between 16 and 33%, less than 1 in 5 of the parents perceived inservice in terms of a 'slight' amount - a marked contrast to teachers and professors.

This difference in perception strongly suggests that further inquiry is needed to better assess what would constitute an adequate amount of inservice to those both within and without the education professions. Certainly, parents supported the need for considerable amounts of inservice. Between 40 and 60% of the parents across the samples indicated considerable amounts of inservice were needed and less than 5% in each of the 4 sample populations stated there was only a slight need for inservice.

Teachers were asked how much inservice they received when they first began teaching. The percent of teachers in the three states reporting that they received all the inservice they needed initially ranged from 19

to 30%. In the Urban/Rural Projects almost half of the teachers (47%) reported that they received substantive amounts of inservice initially. Thus while the majority of teachers stated that they received only moderate or slight amounts of inservice initially, more teachers reported that they had engaged in adequate amounts of inservice when they first began their careers than those who reported they received adequate training at the present time; a comparison which further underscores the paucity of present efforts.

Only between 3 and 7% of the professors believed that teachers received adequate amounts of inservice initially. Part of this discrepancy between what teachers report actually has been the situation in this transitional phase and professors believe to be the situation could well be accounted for by lack of these professor's involvement in this activity. Regardless of the difference in perceptions, it is clear that adequate amounts of inservice either initially or later on in a teacher's career are not being provided.

Still further evidence was acquired to suggest that but limited forms of inservice are now being provided. Each role group was presented with the following inservice typology:

1. Job-embedded (It can be embedded in the job, with the emphasis on actual performance in the classroom. Analysis of television tapes of one's teaching is one example.)

2. Job-related (It can be closely related to the job, but not take place while teaching is going on. For example, a team of teachers can take an after-school workshop on team-teaching.)

3. General professional (It can consist of experiences to improve general competence, but not be tailored to specific needs as closely as the above experiences. For example, science teachers can take workshops on the teaching of biology.)

4. Career/Credential (It can be organized to help one obtain a new credential or prepare for a new role. A teacher can prepare to be a counselor, for example.)

5. Personal (It can facilitate personal development which may or may not be job-related. For example, one might study art history for personel enrichment which might or might not be evident in his/her teaching.)

When teachers were asked how often they engaged in each of the five forms of inservice above, that is (1) regularly, (2) sometimes, or (3) rarely or never, less than 1 in 5 teachers in each of the four populations surveyed reported that they engaged in any of these forms on a regular basis. Conversely, teachers report in the great majority of instances (between 60-85%) that they rarely or ever engage in any of these forms. The perceptions of professors again vary from the self-reports of teachers' experience. Less than 20% of the professors believe that job-embedded or personal forms of inservice are common and, in this respect, thus agree with what teachers report. However, between 30 and 60% of the professors, depending upon the specific sample, believe that teachers more commonly engage in job-related, general professional, or career-credential forms of inservice. This difference in perception may be partly attributible to the phenomenon that while professors see a good many teachers in general professional and credential oriented inservice formats such as the college course, there are apparently a great many teachers who do not or cannot engage regularly in such forms of inservice.

These data suggest that for whatever reason: lack of time, energy, or ready availability of desired programs it may well be that teachers cannot rather than 'prefer not' to engage in these various forms of inservice. For while teachers report that they rarely engage in each of these five types of inservice the great majority of teachers across all sample populations indicate that each and every form of inservice is an excellent or good idea. (See Table 1).

Table 1

PERCENT OF TEACHERS REPORTING EACH TYPE OF INSERVICE AS EXCELLENT OR GOOD IDEA

	Michigan	Georgia	California	Urban/Rural
Job-embedded	65%	79%	70%	77%
Job-related	65%	72%	74%	73%
General/Professional	68%	76%	75%	76%
Career/Credential	56%	72%	68%	70%
Personal	65%	70%	75%	71%

Professors on the other hand believe that teachers prefer inservice which is primarily job-embedded or job-related in nature. Their perception is that only about a third of the teachers (28, 28 and 35% in each of the states) see general professional education as a good or excellent idea. while in fact the great majority desire these activities. For whatever reason the desire of teachers for both school-based and job-specific forms of continuing education appears overstated in the literature and this may have contributed to a distortion of what it is that teachers prefer in the way of inservice by professors. A second explanation may be that while teachers prefer a variety of inservice formats they desire on-the-job follow-through as well. Yet very few teachers report such follow-through on any type of regular basis; from a low of only 6% in one state to a high

of only 23% in the federally funded Urban/Rural Project. The self-perception of professors in this regard corroborates this. Only about one fourth of the professors report they provide inservice follow-up on a regular basis (in some respects a surprisingly high figure), while an equal amount state that they rarely or never do this and, the remainder state that they provide such service only on an occasional basis.

The fact that up to 25 percent of the professors report they engage in on-the-job follow-up regularly should be contrasted with the data in Table 2 where teachers were asked who provides them with the most asistance in performing their present job.

Table ?

PERCENT OF ROLE GROUP IDENTIFIED AS

MOST HELPFUL BY TEACHERS IN PRESENT POSITION

Who Provides Most Help?	Michigan	Georgia	California	Urban/Rural
Other Teachers	59%	55%	62%	46%
Supervisors, Principals, Consultants	23%	35%	21%	36%
Professors	3%	15%	4%	7%

As indicated above teachers ar- in uniform agreement that their colleagues are most helpful in the on-the-job context with professors assuming a marginal role at best. Since professors could and often do work with

a great many teachers for relatively short periods of time in different contexts, this may partially account for the difference in perceptions between professors and teachers with respect to the former's involvement in inservice.

Quality of Inservice

All three primary role groups were surveyed in terms of their perceptions of the effectiveness of current inservice programs. About a fourth of the teachers ranging from a low of 19% in California to a high of 37% in the Urban/Rural Projects reported the quality of inservice in their region as excellent or good. The remaining three quarters of the teachers across each population were divided in describing inservice as either fair or poor. Those in higher education were more critical in their assessments of inservice with less than 15 percent of this role group in each of the samples (from 9% in Michigan to 15 % in Georgia) viewing inservice as generally effective . Parents on the other hand tended to be slightly more positive than the teachers in terms of their perceptions of the effectiveness of teacher inservice in their region. About a third of the parents judged inservice to be excellent or good across the sample groups and over half (54%)stated this to be the case in the Urban/Rural sample. (The latter statistic is testimony to the ability of that program to achieve one of its major goals, that of increased parent/community involvement in local teacher inservice efforts). Likewise, less than 10 percent of the parents considered inservice efforts as not very effective, far less than the professor and teacher groups.

In summary, teachers are fairly divided in terms of how effective they believe inservice to be with a minority judging them to be good or

excellent generally. Those in higher education tend to be more critical and those in the local community less critical. It is uncertain as to just what factors might account for these discrepant perceptions. Certainly, both professors and parents often look at this process as an external observer. Given their background in teacher education professors may well be inclined to be more critical than the parent who likely has a less clear concept of inservice and its potential.

While innovation doesn't equate with quality by any means, about a third of both the teachers and the professors across the four samples reported that the content of inservice was often innovative. Another 40 to 50 percent of both role groups reported this was the case sometimes, with professors reporting slightly more innovation than teachers.

However, when these two professional constituencies were asked which format most exposed teachers to innovative practices, there were basic differences in perception once again. Teachers report district-sponsored activities and then interaction with other teachers as providing them with the most innovative ideas. College courses are ranked third in this regard. When professors on the other hand are asked their opinion they rank college courses as most likely to transport new ideas and skills, followed by district-sponsored activities with little credence given to informal teacher interactions being able to accomplish this purpose. Table 3 illustrates this.

Table 3

TEACHER AND PROFESSOR PERCEPTIONS OF WHAT FORMAT IS MOST LIKELY TO PROVIDE INNOVATIVE CONTENT

	Teachers	Professors
Most innovative	District-sponsored	College Courses
Next most innovative	Interaction with teachers	District-sponsored
Least innovative	College Courses	Teachers interacting with teachers

When the data were analyzed as to whom these two role groups perceived to be the most effective inservice instructors in general, a similar pattern un folded. Teachers generally perceived other teachers to be the most effective instructors and college professors report other college professors most frequently in their capacity. Teachers are fairly divided, however, in their perceptions suggesting professors and district consultants as the most effective, almost as often as they report other teachers. Professors tend to most frequently endorse their own role group and while they tend to acknowledge the effectiveness of their teacher education counterparts in the district, they are less likely to acknowledge teachers in this capacity. There is considerable variance from state to state, however, only 5 percent of the professors in Michigan see teachers as the most effective instructor while almost a fourth(23 percent) of the professors view teachers in this light in California.

The question of the effectiveness of inservice trainers is clarified somewhat when that question is asked in the context of each of the five types of inservice outlined earlier. Teachers very clearly see themselves as the

best instructor for job-embedded forms of inservice. From 61 to 68 percent of the teachers across samples state this. Only about 10 percent see professors as most effective in this type of inservice. Almost as many teachers - from 51 to 68 percent across the samples - see themselves as the most effective in job-related forms of inservice. Another 10 percent or 20 percent altogether report professors as most effective in this category. Teachers do report professors as the best instructors for general professional types of experiences, career/credential forms of inservice and perhaps surprisingly for personal development. It should be noted that teachers acknowledge other teachers as effective instructors in the general professional and personal domains as well.

Professors in turn, across all the sample populations, never perceive teachers as the most effective type of instructor for any of the five types of inservice. Those in higher education see district supervisors and consultants as the most effective instructors for job-embedded forms of inservice and then themselves, and then teachers. In terms of job-related forms of inservice, professors this time view themselves as most effective, followed by district personnel and then teachers again. With respect to general professional and career/credential inservice ventures, professors view this as almost their exclusive domain, ranging from 80 to 90 percent across the sample groups who state that they and their colleagues are the most effective instructors. They also view themselves as the most appropriate instuctor in terms of promoting forms of personal development with only about 1 in 5 acknowledging the teacher as the most effective person in this role.

Certainly then, there is a basic discrepancy between the magnitude, appropriateness and perceived effectiveness of the role teachers view teachers

in general having as instructors in inservice and the role perceived by them by those in higher education. Interestingly, however, when teachers as reported in Table 4 below, are asked whether they personally would like more opportunity to serve as an inservice instructor, there is little evidence of a desire to do so on their part.

Table 4

TEACHER INTEREST IN ASSUMING AN INSERVICE INSTRUCTOR ROLE

Would like opportunity to serve as instructor	Michigan	Georgia	California	Urban/Rural
Very much	9%	9%	15%	18%
Somewhat	36%	35%	36%	34%
Not at all	50%	56%	49%	48%

The pattern is very similar across all four sample groups. Only about 1 in 7 teachers is very much interested in assuming an inservice instructor role (given there are over 2 million teachers, there is still a very sizeable number), slightly more than a third indicate some interest and about one half of the teachers have no interest at all in such a function. Thus, while perhaps the majority of teachers are not interested in serving in an instructional capacity for their peers, it appears that there is enough interest on the part of some teachers to assume a fairly major role and on the part of others to contribute periodically. Given this situation

the high interest of teachers in having other teachers serve as instructors, both formally and informally, appears capable of being satisfied at least in terms of potential and willing resources. This suggests that those in higher education would do well to better acknowledge both the interest of many teachers in peer instruction and the desire by many other teachers to assume more teacher education responsibility. The need for trainer of inservice trainer models may be greater than assumed by many Inservice Decisions and Decision-making.

Both teachers and professors were surveyed as to the extent that there were problems in collaborative governance that is cooperative forms of decision-making between role groups and/or institutions. Such as colleges and local education agencies. They were asked to what extent the following posed problems or obstacles to collaborative forms of decision-making:

1. Lack of skill in cooperative decision-making
2. Vested interests inhibit open communication
3. Lack of conceptual framework to organize parties effectively
4. Lack of financial support for effective collaboration to develop
5. Participants too busy with other priorities to spend time on this activity

The results were remarkably similar between the two role groups and across all four sample populations. The majority of teachers and professors in every instance perceived each of these 5 factors to be a very big or big problem. No one problem was singled out, all factors were seen as major obstacles by between 50 to 75 percent of the respondents in each of the sample groups. Additionally, almost 1 in 7 respondents took time to write in further concerns, when they were asked whether they could suggest other obstacles. While the literature is replete with suggestions for more collaborative approaches to inservice it appears obvious that those engaging in such activity have to this point in time encountered considerable difficulty.

Collaborative decision-making is not restricted to the educational professionals only. Parents and community members have a vested interest as well. Parents were asked about the type of role they desired in decisions about inservice education. They were queried as to the appropriateness of the following types of roles: from not represented at all or informally represented as an advisor or consultant, to formal representation and formal involvement in all aspects of inservice-that is,planning, implementation and evaluation. The result, from 64 to 80 percent of the parents in the 4 samples report that they wish not just to be formally represented but desire to be formally involved in <u>all</u> aspects of inservice. It may well be that current debate and dialogue about roles and functions in inservice between those in the schools and those in the colleges will be more actively mediated by a third force in many cases - the immediate public they serve.

Two of the basic types of decisions which often have to be negotiated in terms of inservice are <u>when</u> should it take place and <u>how</u> should it be supported. All three roles groups were inventoried in terms of the desirability

of the following options for when and how inservice could occur:

1. Released time during the school day
2. Closing school for an afternoon or a day on a regular basis
3. Paying teachers for a month of summer study
4. Paying teachers for weekend or holiday inservice training

The majority of teachers in each sample group saw each of these arrangements as desirable. Strategies which would provide some released time during the instructional day or close school periodically were slightly more popular, with about 75 percent of the teachers supportive of these options. Teachers desire for such arrangements should come as no surprise, especially since they report that they rarely benefit from any of these at the present time. For example, almost 90 percent of the teachers in each of the states report that they rarely or never have been paid for summer or weekend study. Urban/Rural teachers, participants in a federal program, obsiously have had more such opportunities. Likewise less than 1 in 5 teachers regularly experience arrangements where they have released time or school is closed. Michigan teachers deviate somewhat, where about 1 in 4 have released time and 1 in 3 report periodic arrangements to close school.

Those in higher education are even more supportive than teachers of such options. Over 80 percent of the professors in each of the three samples support released time for example. The exception is weekend or holiday sessions where they are slightly less supportive than teachers. Parents on the other hand, while generally supportive of these options, are not as supportive as teachers are and certainly not as supportive as those in higher education (likely the greater availability of teachers for inservice explains some of the enthusiasm of professors in this regard). Only about 5 percent in 4 view released time as a "very good" idea, with another third stating this to be a fair idea. They are even less enthusiastic about closing school. Less than 1 parent in 5 in the different states sees this as a very good idea, while about 1 in 3 of the urban/rural parents would support such a scheme. With the exception of Michigan, there is considerable support for paying for summer study with over 60 percent of the parents stating they are willing to do this and a majority of parents in all samples reports paying for weekend or holiday sessions as either a very good or fair idea. In general then, while parents are, perhaps understandably, not as enthusiastic as teachers about these options, the majority of them are not opposed to such schemes and appear willing to support them financially (with the exception of closing school).

The typology of different forms of inservice was once again used to ascertain whether these role groups would differentiate who should support inservice based upon why the inservice was engaged in. As expected, the role groups did vary in their opinion of who ought to pay according to the type of inservice engaged in. Teachers stated they should bear the burndt of the burden in inservice which emphasizes personal growth and career reorientation. This view was shared by the other role groups. Parents were

even more supportive of the state or district assuming some of the cost for career reorientation, realizing perhaps that such changes serving are often in their best interests as a consumer (as well as those career aspirations of teachers) as well.

On the job needs were seen as primarily the responsibility of the district with some aid by the state especially from the perspective of the parent and those in higher education. This same response was generated (across role groups) with respect to inservice designed to implement program changes. Again, parents and professors acknowledged a sizeable responsibility for the state. The general professional type of inservice was seen as a shared responsibility by all role groups, with the teachers, district, state and even teacher organizations assuming some financial responsibility here.

Summary

The concensus among all role groups is that inservice is a fairly infrequent activity. While parents believe there is more occuring than teachers report there is, these nonprofessional educators are as strong in their endorsement of the need for substantive amounts of inservice as those within the profession are. Professors see general professional and career/credential forms of inservice as more common than teachers and these data suggest they are unaware of the many teachers who are not actively pursuing such forms of inservice. This is not to say that teachers don't desire all varieties of inservice identified in the questionnaire, including the general professional variety. The recent clamor in the literature for more school-based pragmatic forms of inservice may well have distracted from the need for teachers to get out of his or her

immediate situation more frequently and pursue experiences other than which he or she daily lives with. Teachers do desire on-the-job follow-up however, and such activity is rare and hardly in priority at this time by most professors.

The quality of inservice is equally suspect. A sizeable majority of teachers across all populations surveyed rate inservice as only fair or even poor. Higher education is even more critical and parents slightly more positive. It does appear that inservice is more frequently seen as "innovative" in nature, but this innovation is usually associated with the role group responding, that is, teachers see themselves as the primary source of innovation and professors hold a similar view of themselves and their colleagues. The same variation in perception is held generally with respect to the question of who the most effective inservice instructors might be. Generally, teachers view other teachers in this light and professors, with the exception of job embedded forms of inservice, see their colleagues this way. Teachers, however, acknowledge the appropriateness and effectiveness of professors in both more personal and more general types of inservice. Professors, however, don't embrace a similar view of their school-based counterparts. It appears that they rarely believe teachers to be the most effective instructors for their own inservice. Other school personnel are consistently ranked behind both teachers and professors with principals rarely perceived as the most effective instructors.

Collaborative governance is desired but seen as fraught with problems by all who have participated in such decision-making. It is apparent that parents desire a bigger piece of the action in these decisions at the school level than they have had in the past. There is a fair amount of agreement

between role groups that teachers need schemes which will release them more regularly to engage in inservice and parents are generally willing to endorse such plans and provide financial support for them provided they are involved in the decisions as well.